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DESIGNS AND WORKING DRAWINGS.

BY LEWIS F. DAY.



FROM the point of view of the craftsman the most interesting drawings are working drawings—just the last to be appreciated by the public, because they are the last to be understood. The most admired of show drawings are to craftsmen comparatively without interest. They recognize the "competition" drawing at once: they see how it was made to secure the commission, and not with a view to its effect in execution (which is the true and only end of a design), and we do not wonder at the failure

the inclination, to finish up his drawings to the point that pleases generally; the inventive spirit has not the patience. We have each of us failings complimentary to our faculties, and *vice versa*; and you will usually find—certainly it is my experience—that the makers of very elaborately finished drawings seldom do anything more than what we have seen before, and that men of any individuality, actual designers that is to say, have a way of considering a drawing finished as soon as ever it expresses what they mean.

You may take it then, as a general rule, that highly finished and elaborate drawings are got up for show, "finished for exhibition" as they say (in compliance with the supposed requirements of an exhibition, rather than with a view to practical purposes), and that drawings completed only so far as is necessary, precise in their details, disfigured by notes in writings, sections and so on, are, at least, genuine workaday designs.

If you ask what a design should be like—well, like a design. It is altogether a different thing from a picture; it is almost the reverse of it. Practically no man has, as I said, the leisure, even if he had the ability, to make an effective finished



of competitions in general. For the man who cares least, if even he knows, how a design will appear in execution, is most likely to perpetrate a prettiness which will gain the favor of the inexpert, with whom the selection is likely to rest.

The general public, and all, in fact, who are technically ignorant on the subject, need to be warned that the most attractive and what are called "taking" drawings are just those which are least likely to be designs—still less *bona fide* working drawings. The real workmen has not the time, even if he had

picture of a thing yet to be carried out—perhaps *not* to be carried out. This last is a most serious consideration for him, and may have a sad effect upon his work. The artist who could afford thus to give himself away gratis, would certainly not do so; the man who might be willing to do it, could not; for if he has "got no work to do"—that is at least presumptive evidence that he is not a master of his craft.

The design that looks like a picture is likely to be, at best, a reminiscence of something done before; and the more often it

has been done the more likely it is to be pictorially successful—and by so much the less it is, strictly speaking, a design.

This applies especially to designs on a small scale, such as are usually submitted to catch the rare commission. To imitate in a full sized cartoon the texture of material, the accident of reflected lights, and other such accidents of effect, is sheer nonsense, which no practical workmen would think of. A painter put to the uncongenial task of decorative design might be excused for attempting to make his productions pass muster by workmanship excellent in itself, although not in the least to the point: one does what one can, or what one must; and if a man has a faculty he needs must show it. Only, the perfection of painting will not, for all that, make design.

In the first small sketch design, everything need not, of course be expressed; but it should be indicated—for the purpose is simply to explain the scheme proposed: so much of pictorial representation as may be necessary to that is desirable, and no more. It should be in the nature of a diagram, specific enough to illustrate the idea, and how it is to be worked out. It ought, by strict rights, to commit one definitely to a certain method of execution, as a written specification would, and may often with advantage be helped out by written notes, which explain more definitely than any pictorial rendering just how this is to be wrought: that cast, the other chased, and so on, as the case may be.

Whatever the method of expression the artist may adopt, he should be perfectly clear in his own mind how his design is to be worked out—and he ought to make it clear also to anyone with sufficient technical knowledge to understand a drawing.

In the first sketch for a window, for example, he need not show every lead, or every pane of glass; but there should be no possible mistake as to how it is to be glazed, or which is "painted" glass and which is "mosaic." To omit the necessary bars in a sketch for glass seems to me a weak concession to the prejudice of the public. One *may* have to concede such points sometimes; but the concession is due less to necessity than to the, what shall we call it?—not perhaps exactly the cowardice, but at all events the timidity of the artist.

In a full sized working drawing or cartoon everything material to the design should be expressed, and that as definitely as possible. In a cartoon for glass (to take again the same example) every lead-line should be shown as well as the saddle bars; to omit them is about as excusable as it would be to leave out the sections from a design for cabinet work. It is contended sometimes that such details are not necessary, that the artist can bear all that in mind. Doubtless he can, more or less; but I am inclined to believe more strongly in the *less*. At any rate he will much more certainly have them in view if he keeps them visibly before his eyes. One thing that deters him is the fear of offending the client, who will not believe, when he sees leads and bars in a drawing, how little they are likely to assert themselves in the glass.

Very much the same thing applies to designs and working drawings generally. A thorough craftsman never suggests a form or color without realizing in his own mind how he will be able to get in the actual work; and in his working drawing he explains that fully, making allowance even for some not impossible dullness of apprehension on the part of the executant. Thus, if a thing is to be woven he shows the cards to be employed, he arranges what parts are "single," what "double," as the weavers call it; what changes in the shuttle are proposed, and by the crossing of which threads certain intermediate tints are to be obtained.

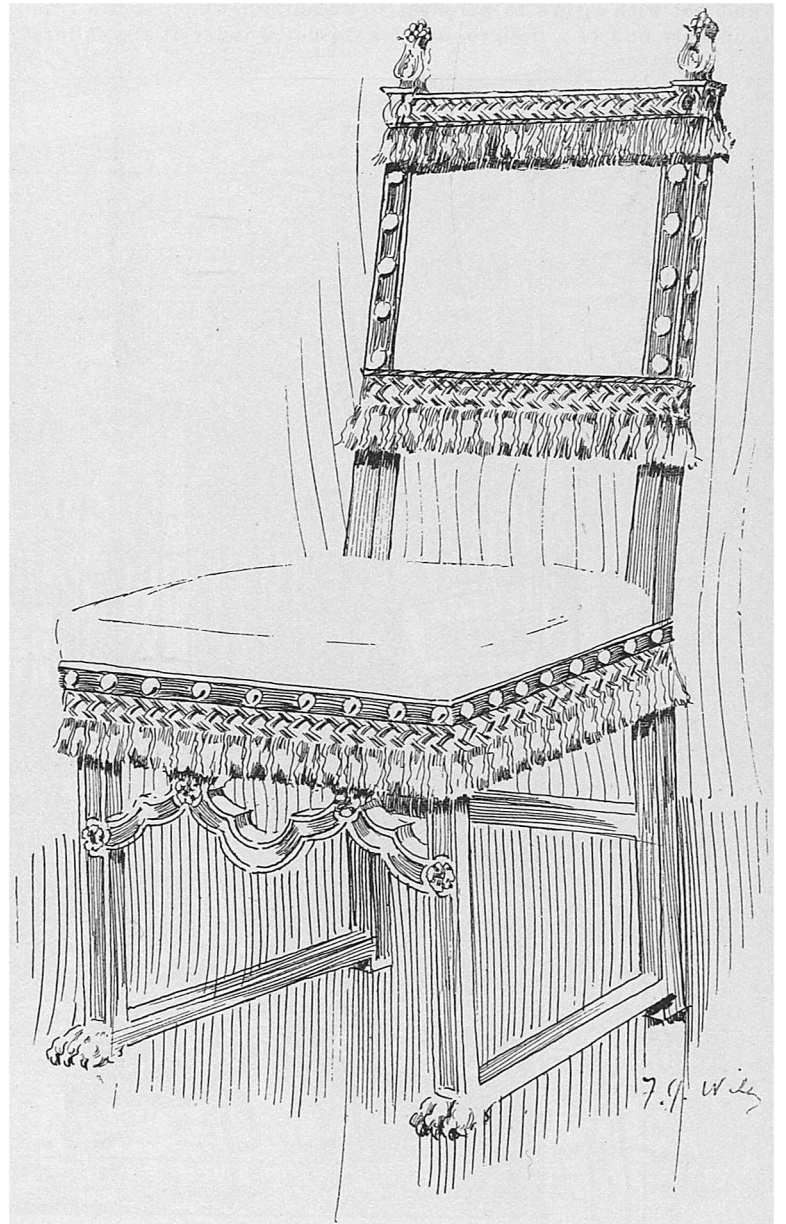
Or, again, if it is for a wall-paper printing, he arranges not only for the blocks, but the order in which they shall be printed and provides for possible printing in "flock" or for the printing of one transparent color over another, so as to get more colors than there are blocks used.

In either case, too, he shows quite plainly the limits of each color, not so much seeking the softness of effect which is his ultimate aim, as the precision which will enable the block or card cutter to see at a glance what he means, and that even at the risk of a certain hardness in his drawing; for the drawing is in itself of no account; it is only the means to an end; and his end is the stuff, the paper, or whatever it may be, *in execution*.

A workman intent on his design, will sacrifice his drawing to it—harden it, as I said, for the sake of emphasis, annotate it, patch it, cut it up, do anything to make his meaning clear to the workman who comes after him. It is, as a rule, only the dilettante who is dainty about preserving his drawings.

There may be some temptation to an artist very much in repute to be careful of his designs, and to elaborate them (himself, or by the hands of his assistants) because so finished, they have a commercial value as drawings—but this is at best pot boiling; and the only men who are subject to this temptation are just those who might be proof against it. Men so much in repute that even their working drawings are in demand, have no such urgent need to work for the pot; and the working drawings of men to whom the pounds and shillings must needs be a real consideration, are not sought after.

In the case of very smart and highly finished drawings by comparatively unknown designers—of ninety-nine out of a hundred that is to say, or nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand perhaps—elaboration implies, either that, having little to say a man fills up his time in saying it at unnecessary length, or that he is working for exhibition.



ITALIAN CHAIR. DESIGNED BY F. J. WILBY.

And why not work for exhibition, it may be asked? There is a simple answer to that: the exhibition pitch is in much too high a key, and in the long run it will ruin the faculty of the workman who adopts it.

It is only fair to admit that an exhibition of fragmentary and unfinished drawings, soiled, tattered and torn, as they almost invariably come from the workshop or factory, would make a very poor show—and the Selection Committee of the Society have to keep that in mind. It is for this reason that they insist upon some sort of frame to all drawings exhibited; for what is not worth a frame of some kind is probably not worth showing; and anyone who proposed to frame a drawing would naturally concern himself as to its appearance in its

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

frame, and would endeavor to make it presentable. That is a very different thing from working it up to picture pitch; and no one who thinks about it, however slight his experience, will confound the two.

DECORATIVE NOTES.

No bedroom should be without one or more screens. A screen between a window and a bed, not only keeps off any possible draught, but it shades the eyes from too strong a light. For this purpose it must have closed joints and touch the floor. It can be draped to match the bed hangings, or the window curtains, or it can be lightly embroidered with sprays of flowers, or decorated with the artist's brush, the style of decoration and coloring according with the finish and furnishing of the room.

A DECORATOR may possess all necessary scientific and technical knowledge of his calling, his treatment of the brush be skillful, his knowledge of design and the proportion of same be perfect, but the entire effect may be destroyed, or at least marred, if the coloring does not receive proper attention. In the selection and arrangement of his colors his degree of taste, refinement and art will be seen. A certain shade in one place will appear entirely different when exposed and contrasted to different lights and surroundings, and the successfully decorated room receives its maximum amount of work not in labor, or in materials, but in thought and study.

THE age of sombre dignity is passed. Social functions are becoming more spontaneous and unconventional, and whether the dining room be situated in the basement, or back parlor, or an extension, good taste dictates that it should be light, sparkling and radiant. As cultivation supersedes formality, original decorations and service daily grow in favor.

A REALLY beautiful pair of portières were made of blue denim, the body of the portieres dark blue, with bands of light at top and bottom, upon which were painted with oil colors, thinned with turpentine poppies, in all the glory of their splendid tones, and on the background of denim, commonplace as the material is, the flowers stand forth a very delight to the

color loving eye. Another pair had the light bands embroidered with linen floss, and the top part was so turned as to make a deep fall over, edged with knotted fringe of cream white hammock cord.

IN the most modern houses the brass onyx and nickel and-irons, and the embossed firebacks need no covering, but in old houses there is an air of forlornity about a blackened, disused cavern beneath a mantelpiece. Every variety of beautification has been attempted by housekeepers with variable success. A very graceful design for the purpose consists of a bamboo frame

on which is stretched canvas of the proper size. The canvas has a clouded gray background, on which appear two storks. In front of the painting, on one side, stands a jar containing growing palms, and over the corner of the frame on the other side is draped soft graceful folds of India silk in pale green and lemon color.

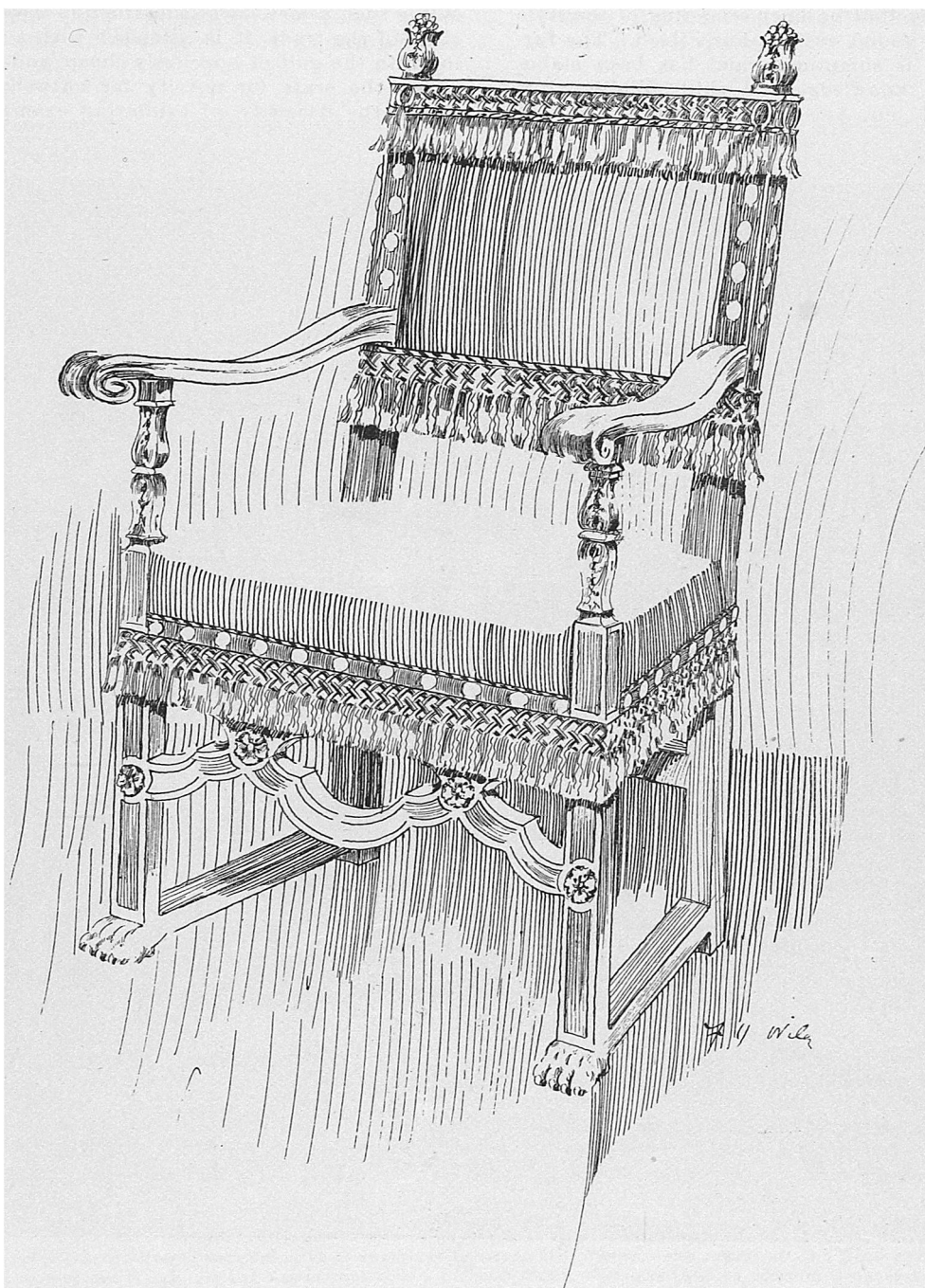
EVERY kind of screen should have its distinct purpose, and yet should harmonize with its surroundings. Its design and coloring may either give it special value in the scheme of decoration, or it may be made to serve merely as a background or accessory. For instance there is generally one cold corner at a dinner table, nearest to the window, or between two doors, and a screen is the only available means of keeping off the draught. To be of any real use it should be placed as near as possible to the table, thus forming a background to the person it shelters. The screen in this case should be in some low tone; dull orange is very useful, as it offers a becoming setting to almost any complexion. For a background screen figure painting is not desirable, the best effect being gained by full draperies of rich brocaded material, so arranged that the di-

visions of the screen are not emphasized. The woodwork should touch the floor, and should accord with the woodwork in the room.

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ITALIAN ARM CHAIR. DESIGNED BY F. J. WILEY.